

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----041935 030409Z /62

O 021850Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0934

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 19741

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, UK, RH

SUBJ: RHODESIA: THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH OWEN

1. OWEN'S POSITION ON A DECEMBER TRIP TO SOUTHERN AFRICA WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAS HARDENED OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS. HE THINKS A TRIP WILL ONLY INVITE AFRICAN DEMANDS THAT WE DEPOSE SMITH AND SUGGESTS INSTEAD THAT WE WAIT FOR KAUNDA TO COME AROUND AND FOR SMITH'S INITIATIVE TO FALL APART. WE SUSPECT OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AFFECT OWEN'S THINKING AS WELL:

-- OWEN BELIEVES THAT IF SMITH PRODUCES A PLAN FOR A GENUINE TRANSFER OF POWER ON THE BASIS OF ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE, THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO TO OBJECT EVEN IF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE AND THE FRONT LINE DISAPPROVES. HE BELIEVES THE PRESIDENT ENDORSED THIS VIEW IN JULY, AND HE IS INCLINED TO GIVE SMITH A CHANCE TO PROVE HIMSELF;

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-- IF SMITH IS INDEED EMBARKED ON A GENUINE SETTLEMENT THEN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS HAVE ESSENTIALLY SERVED THEIR PURPOSE. OWEN THINKS HE WOULD BE CRITICIZED AT HOME FOR A DOG-IN-THE MANGER ATTITUDE WHICH SEEMS TO BELITTLE SMITH'S ACTION;

-- IF OUR INITIATIVE IS STYMIED, OWEN BELIEVES, THE FAULT LIES CLEARLY WITH KAUNDA. HE IS PERSONALLY

ANNOYED BY THIS, BUT ALSO BELIEVES THE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS HAVE LOST THE MORAL AUTHORITY TO DEMAND SMITH'S REMOVAL THROUGH SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. -- HE BELIEVES THE ANGLO-AMERICAN POSITION IS STRONG NOW AND WOULD BE DISSIPATED IF WE SEEM TO CHASE AFTER INCONCLUSIVE TALKS WITH THE FRONT LINE OR THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.

2. OWEN CAN MAKE A GOOD CASE AGAINST A DECEMBER TRIP, BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE IN MIND BEYOND A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE. WE THINK THE FOLLOWING POINTS SHOULD BE MADE TO/THE BRITISH. -- WE AGREE THAT WE MUST REMAIN FIRM IN OUR PROPOSALS. THEY ARE SOUND AND ARE THE STANDARD AGAINST WHICH ANY ALTERNATIVE MUST BE MEASURED. BUT WE SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER WHAT WE WANT OUR POSITION TO LOOK LIKE A MONTH OR TWO FROM NOW WHEN SMITH AND KAUNDA BEGIN TO SWING BACK TO OUR INITIATIVE. TO REMAIN PASSIVE OR TO APPEAR INDIFFERENT AT THIS JUNCTURE RUNS SEVERAL DANGERS. -- IF SMITH IS INDEED PURSUING A GENUINE TRANSFER OF POWER, IT IS IN LARGE MEASURE BECAUSE OF OUR ACTIVE PRESSURE. IF WE RELAX NOW, SMITH MIGHT BELIEVE HE IS OFF THE HOOK AND CAN OFFER THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN WHAT WE HAVE PROPOSED. MOREOVER, A GENUINE TRANSFER IMPLEMENTED BY SMITH CANNOT AT THIS STAGE ASSURE THE STABILITY OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE; CONFIDENTIAL

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-- WE MUST DEMONSTRATE TO MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE THAT OUR PROPOSALS ARE ALIVE AND OFFER THE BEST CHANCE OF A SETTLEMENT. THEY HAVE BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO REJECT THE WHITE PAPER. IF THEY SENSE THAT WE HAVE RUN OUT OF STEAM, HOWEVER, THEY MAY CONCLUDE THAT A LESS THAN GENUINE ARRANGEMENT WITH SMITH IS THEIR ONLY ALTERNATIVE. THEIR HAND WILL BE STRENGTHENED IF THEY KNOW THERE IS ANOTHER OPTION; -- THERE ARE SIGNS THAT KAUNDA IS ALREADY COMING AROUND. HE MUST BE ENCOURAGED RATHER THAN ISOLATED. -- WE SHOULD KEEP AFTER THE PATRIOTIC FRONT EITHER TO GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO TALK OR TO ESTABLISH THEIR INTRANSIGENCE. OWEN'S LETTER TO THE SECRETARY IMPLIES WE MAY TRY TO GET BACK ON COURSE BY COMPROMISING WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ON BASIC PRINCIPLES. THIS IS NOT OUR INTENTION; -- NYERERE, MACHEL, OBASANJO, AND KHAMA ALL CONTINUE IN THEIR SUPPORT OF US. IF THEY SENSE BY OUR INACTIVITY THAT WE HAVE LOST HEART OR HAVE ABANDONED OUR INITIATIVE IT WILL BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO REGAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE WHEN WE TRY LATER TO PICK UP THE PIECES; -- IF WE REMAIN RETICENT AND THEREBY APPEAR TO CONDONE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 19741

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SMITH'S INTERNAL PLAN -- AS IF THIS HAD BEEN OUR OBJECT-
IVE ALL ALONG -- THEN THE FRONT LINE WILL DEMAND WE DO
SOMETHING ABOUT SMITH REGARDLESS OF HOW WE HAPPEN TO
APPORTION THE BLAME;
-- WE CANNOT SEEM TO KEEP WALDHEIM AND THE SECURITY
COUNCIL DANGLING INDEFINITELY;
-- VOSTER NOW HAS THE ELECTIONS BEHIND HIM AND HIS IN-
TERNAL POSITION IS STRENGTHENED. WE SHOULD LET HIM
KNOW WHERE WE STAND AND WHERE WE ARE GOING. WE SHOULD
NOW SHOW VORSTER (AND SIGNAL TO SMITH) THAT WE REMAIN
CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
CONNECTION;
-- SONNY RAMPHAL, TO WHOM OWEN REFERRED IN HIS LETTER,
WAS INDEED DISAPPOINTED IN KAUNDA'S ATTITUDE, BUT HE HAS
TOLD US THAT WE MUST SHOW OUR VIGOROUS INTENTION TO
PRESS FORWARD OR RISK LOSING WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
-- PERHAPS NONE OF THESE CONCERNS ALONE JUSTIFIES A
TRIP BY OWEN AND YOUNG OR A SIMILAR COMBINATION, BUT
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CUMULATIVELY THEY ARGUE FOR SUCH AN UNDERTAKING. OUR OBJECTIVES IN THE IMMEDIATE PERIOD ARE LIMITED; MOMENTUM AND INITIATIVE ARE THEMSELVES IMPORTANT TO SUSTAIN WHAT WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY PUT TOGETHER. WE SHOULD AS A MINIMUM FIND OUT WHETHER NYERERE, KAUNDA AND MACHEL WOULD THINK A HIGH-LEVEL VISIT USEFUL AND BE PREPARED TO RESPOND IN SOME FORM IF THEY ENCOURAGE US;
-- IN SUM,IF WE HAVE THE "HIGH GROUND" THAT OWEN DESCRIBES IN HIS LETTER TO THE SECRETARY, WE SHOULD PARADE AROUND IT.

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